

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2765

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to information and services for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Brief Description: Establishing an advisory council on early interventions for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Sponsors: By Representatives Dickerson, Kagi, McDermott, Moeller, Talcott, Chase, Conway, Kenney and Morrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/2/04, 2/4/04 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/16/04, 95-1.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 3/4/04, 48-0.

House Concurred.

Passed House: 3/9/04, 94-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes an advisory council in the Department of Social and Health Services on early intervention services for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Requires the advisory council to develop statewide standards for early intervention services and early intervention services providers specifically related to children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Requires the advisory council to create a pamphlet to be provided to the parents of a child in the state who is diagnosed with hearing loss.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Boldt, Ranking Minority Member; Roach, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Dickerson, Miloscia, Pettigrew and Shabro.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

As part of the House Children and Family Services Committee's 2003 interim plan, the committee assembled a Work Group on Deaf Education in Washington (Work Group) to consider the respective roles of, and the relationships among, the Washington School for the Deaf (WSD), local school districts, educational service districts, community services, and community resources in the delivery of effective education to hearing impaired children throughout the state, as well as the appropriate service delivery models for those children.

The Work Group consisted of the following: parents of a hearing impaired child; a hearing impaired adult; researchers on hearing impairment; a teacher of hearing impaired children; two members of the Board of Trustees of the WSD; a representative of the Office of the Governor; a representative of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); a representative of Washington Sensory Disabilities Services; a representative of a local school district; a representative of an educational service district; a representative of the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP) in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS); four members of the Senate; a member of the House Education Committee; and the members of the House Children and Family Services Committee.

The Work Group held three meetings over the course of the interim at which a range of issues and topics were discussed, including current service delivery in the state from newborn hearing screening and early intervention services through the P-12 system, technological advances relating to hearing impairment, and the most recent research on outcomes and costs relating to hearing impairment.

At the final meeting of the Work Group, the members of the Work Group developed consensus statements, which reflect the basic principles agreed upon by all of the members of the Work Group, and goals and policy recommendations, which are based upon those consensus statements. The goals of the Work Group included ensuring that appropriate early intervention services for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, spanning the spectrum of communication and educational options, are provided throughout the state, with the corresponding policy recommendation that statewide standards be developed by an advisory council for early intervention services and early intervention services providers specifically for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The goals also included providing appropriate and timely counseling and information for parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing throughout the state, with the corresponding policy recommendation that a pamphlet be created by an advisory council to be provided to parents by their children's pediatricians or audiologists upon diagnosis of hearing loss. This policy recommendation specified that the pamphlet should contain information on the variety of interventions and treatments available for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as resources for parent support, counseling, financing, and education.

Summary of Bill:

There is established an advisory council in the DSHS for the purpose of advancing the development of a comprehensive and effective statewide system to provide prompt and effective early interventions for children in the state who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families.

Members of the advisory council must have training, experience, or interest in hearing loss in children. Membership must include, but not be limited to, the following: pediatricians; audiologists; teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing; parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing; and representatives of the WSD, the ITEIP, the Department of Health, and the OSPI.

By January 1, 2005, the advisory council is required to develop statewide standards for early intervention services and early intervention services providers specifically related to children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The advisory council is required to create a pamphlet to be provided to the parents of a child in the state who is diagnosed with hearing loss by their child's pediatrician or audiologist, as appropriate, upon diagnosis of hearing loss. The pamphlet must contain, at minimum, information on the following:

- the variety of interventions and treatments available for children who are deaf or hard of hearing; and
- resources for parent support, counseling, financing, and education related to hearing loss in children.

The pamphlet must be available for distribution by July 1, 2005.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill focuses on early intervention. It establishes an advisory council with suggested members. The intent is to establish statewide standards for early intervention services and to provide information to parents concerning options available to them.

(With concerns) Certificated staff from the WSD should be included in the membership of the advisory council.

Testimony Against: The bill should be amended to include references to communication options. There would be a gross under-representation of deaf and hard of hearing community members on the advisory council. The bill should be amended to include representatives of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the WSD Outreach Program. The bill should not require the advisory council to create a pamphlet. Plenty of unbiased pamphlets have already been developed by Dr. Nancy Hatfield, who is very well respected.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Dickerson, Prime sponsor; and Seth Dawson, Little Red School House.

(With concerns) Lynn Maier, Washington Public Employees Association and United Food and Commercial Workers.

(Opposed) Larry Petersen, Washington State Association of the Deaf and the Washington State Hearing Loss Alliance.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.